

Container Gardening Secrets: Tips For The Beginner

Why Container Gardening Is Beneficial

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my mother Sarah. You are my inspiration.

INTRODUCTION

A fantastic way to get some gardening done is to put together a container garden. This type of gardening can be done by those with limited amounts of yard space. It simply allows the use of containers instead of planting things in the ground.

The great thing about this form of gardening is that any type of container can be used to create the garden. It could be a half barrel, milk jugs or terra cotta pots. Anything receptacle that can hold soil can be used as long as it has proper drainage in the form of holes at the bottom of it. If you are recycling a container, you can always bore the holes beforehand.

The garden can be large if the space allows for it or it can be nice and simple and small. Almost anything can be planted in a container garden from herbs to vegetables to flowers to trees and shrubs. The main thing to bear in mind when doing container gardening is that the container ought to be the right size for the plants being put in it. To be safe it is best to get the container two sizes or one size larger than you require. The plant will have the necessary room to grow and thrive.

The other element to having a great container garden is the type of soil that is used in the garden. Soil should not be taken from the yard and simply placed in the container as whatever pests or diseases are in the soil will simply be transferred to the container. It is advised that new soil be bought and used.

To have a streamlined garden, it is advised that matching pots be used, just to add that bit of uniformity. They can be of the same style or the same color. Once you have the right soil and the right sized pots, the plants will thrive and not need a lot of care. If you are thinking about going into full fledged gardening and are afraid to do so, you can always try a bit of container gardening beforehand.

CHAPTER 1- AN OVERVIEW OF CONTAINER GARDENING

Here are a few ideas about container gardening you may not have thought of. First of all, vegetables and herbs can be a very interesting alternative to container gardening, and with the new varieties of tomatoes and things, they are even pleasant to look at, and you can harvest them a little at a time.



A great way to garden and bring extra color to your garden is to use really large containers, particularly if they are glazed in bright colors. If you use small cedars, you might even want to bring them in for Christmas decorations. Other kinds of plants may need to be brought in during the cold months, especially if you have a small garden or green house.

You can even decorate for special occasions such as weddings and parties using planters and container gardening; the impact is surprising and quite pleasing. If you have small containers, they make great party favors and gifts as well. Terrariums are beautiful house gifts.

Container plants can be exceptionally beautiful, and some are capable of having their appeal year round. In other words, you can plant very small evergreen trees and bushes in pots and containers, as long as you meet their water needs, which will be more frequently than if they were in the ground. You can even plant miniature fruit trees.

Container gardening can be really fun, particularly if you rent or don't have a lot of space. It could be that your yard just looks better with containers, especially the really large ones. There are few rules and guidelines you can follow. Clay pots are more porous, unless they're glazed, and glass or plastic make good containers, because they don't dry out the plants as quickly as the unglazed pots. Also, it's a little more difficult to make a small pot have 'harmony' and balance.

Small plants should have the tall plants in the center of the pot, unless they are 'framing' a wall. It's always nicer to have something that droops over the edges to get the 'movement' from high, to low correct.

It's important to make sure the shade plants are together with other shade plants, and sun loving plants are put with other sun loving plants. The plants that love water should be together with others of the same variety as well. If you have succulents, and cacti, they should go together as well.

You need to be concerned with the amount of root space you provide, the more space you have, the better. It's also necessary to make sure you use a special soil formulated for potted plants, and make sure you read the directions provided for the ph levels that your particular plants require. Some like sandy soil, loamy soil, or other kinds of plant medium.

You should change at least the top half of your soil each year, and add nutrient. A slow releasing fertilizer is best, because you don't want to burn the roots. A fertilizer will last approximately three months or perhaps more.

If your potted plants are fast growing you should also separate them in late fall or early spring before they begin the new cycle of growth. Gently separate the roots and place them in new containers, and water them well. This rule may vary depending on the plants and where you live, and in which temperature zone.

The traditional planting method is easiest, particularly if you are a beginner. Make sure you leave plenty of room for your plants to grow, so that they look beautiful and robust. It's always a good idea to consider your colors as well, either using the primary or secondary spectrum. If you consider the color of the leaves, then of course, they will probably change to some degree during the season. In that case, you might consider using the side of the spectrum that includes yellow to dark green. The succulents however, usually have a more limited color spectrum, favoring the dark green, to silver. Some evergreens can even be blue, as in the Blue Spruce. But its generally better to be more conservative in your color choices, so you won't have any clashing or conflicting colors. It would be sort of jarring, and the visual impact would be unclear otherwise.

Potted gardens can really dress up your garden, even if you use regular gardening techniques for the rest of your property. They're wonderful to line a garden pathway or walkway, and porches as well. This brings to mind hanging planters, which also can be pots, or can be baskets with loamy moss, which require more watering. House plants make great hanging baskets that can be brought in during the winter months.

Usually, hanging pots and even the more traditional, standing pots can really surprise you in terms of the facility and ease with which they grow. Especially make sure they are watered more often. You will be delighted to see the colors spring to life, and your plants thrive, because pots protect your plants a little more from animals and the like. Of course, if you over-plant, they will have to fight for their own space, but some people prefer that environment, because their plants look robust to begin with, and its less worry about which plants should survive, and which shouldn't. If you're this kind of person, you might not even mind the stray 'weed' growing, as long as it looks good. So, if you are considering containers for your garden there are lots of possibilities.

CHAPTER 2- WHAT ARE THE VARIOUS TYPES OF CONTAINER GARDENING?

There are quite a number of different types of container gardening methods that bring about a variety of beautiful plants, flowers, fruits, and vegetables. The different types of containers include wooden planters, umbrella planters, concrete planters, hanging planters, clay pots, metal planters, plus many improvised homemade containers. Now these vessels just mentioned are types of containers which are utilized for planting and growing a variety of different items. These containers in volume can grow over 500 different types of vegetables, plants, flowers, and fruits. The materials that need to be placed into the containers for growing can include top soil, potting soil, peat moss, fertilizer, or special blends of different types. This type of gardening is a fun and fascinating method of growing all sorts of vegetation.

The mixture that you use in your containers is very important. Following these tips will give you the best mixture of growing soil possible. First when you add fertilizer, make sure that you don't add too much because this will set up root damage. Second make sure that your soil is no more than a foot deep, for even temperature distribution. Third be sure that the containers have drain holes in the bottoms, to keep roots from dry rotting. Fourth make sure that the seeds or plants get an adequate amount of water, depending on the directions.



Types of Gardening via Containers

When you garden using containers, give a little thought about the types of vessels that you plan on using. Certain containers are good for particular items and a danger to others. An example is that it would be a bad idea to place a small tree in a hanging container for obvious reasons. A tree has to have room to grow roots into the ground. A little common sense will go a long way, when dealing with plants, flowers, fruits, and vegetables. The goal of any type of container gardening is to have your vegetation flourish and grow.

Utilizing Wooden Planters

This is a type of container that could be considered temporary, for the simple reason of what it is constructed of. Any type of vegetation planted must be watered and a container constructed from wood can start rotting after a while. There are so “wooden planters” that have a wooden structure on the outside for show. The inside of these items is usually made of some non-rotting material like plastic, pottery, or glass. However, they still must have drain holes in the bottom of the second material for draining purposes. In heavily wooded areas, one will find a large quantity of wooden planters because of the abundance of wood. This is true even though the durability of this type of container has a limited life span.

The Use of Umbrella Planters

Umbrella planters are usually constructed in a leaf type pattern. This design adds an element of decorative beauty to the growth pattern. The most common type is to have three or more clay pots sitting secure in a metal tree like structure. The individual pots have items growing in them, while secured in metal rings. When plants, flowers, and other types of vegetation are fully grown, the site can be quite picturesque.

Concrete Planter Use

Most of these planters are between two and four feet long, but there can be other sizes. They are constructed to be show planters in secure locations, where they are seldom moved. Usually the growth is transferred from other containers to the more decorative concrete ones, once they reach a certain size.

Hanging Garden Type

The hangers for this type of container are usually for outdoor and indoor plants of the vine variety. The pot is usually plastic with holes for draining that is secured by some sort of string hanging ropes.

Clay Pots

These are the most universal containers for planting seeds and nurturing seedlings. Even though you find most new plants in clay pots, most of these are temporary containers. Unless they are purchased specifically for individual uses, clay pots are changed out at the first opportunity. When you go into a place where plants are sold, you most likely see all of the plants that are for sale in clay pots of different sizes. This is in addition to the plastic containers that are the preferred choice of many stores.

Metal Planters

These are rather unique planters that you don't see every day. Like the concrete containers, the metal planters are more for show. Once the smaller plants have been grown to a certain size, they are transferred to metal planters and placed in more permanent locations. You usually see this type in public places.

Various types of container gardening can be fun and exciting, provided that you use common sense. You can improvise on a number of planting and growing techniques, provided that you read the initial directions that came with your seeds or plants. One of the major factors in the life and growth of any type of vegetation is the amount of water that the plant requires. Do not over or under water any of your vegetation; this is one of the major causes of death of plants and flowers.

Fruits and vegetables are a little less delicate when it comes to water issues, but they do need a adequate amount to grow and flourish. You have a choice of the type of container gardening that best suits your needs. There are a lot of factors to take into account. However, one of the most intriguing facts about container gardening is the options that you have.

CHAPTER 3- GETTING STARTED WITH CONTAINER GARDENING

Container gardening is something that is really catching on. However, without really understanding how to get going with the process, it could be tricky to get the project up and running. This chapter will outline the necessary steps to help you get this project completed, and at the same time give you specific approaches that can help to achieve success throughout the process. While the concept is relatively simple, this style of gardening requires a bit of consideration and planning that might not be as prevalent in other gardening approaches.

Choosing the kinds of plants that you would like to grow would be the first step. This will help you in latter parts of the container gardening process, and will start to give you ideas of what containers will be ideal for the growth of the plant in question. Generally speaking, the most common style of plants for this type of gardening is various floral arrangements. This is possibly due to the allure of the gardening style itself, taking something old and generally unused and allowing it to become a receptacle for something alive and beautiful.

Since you have now determined that you are going to need something old and unused to become the container worthy of housing your new plant, it is time to start considering which item you have around that you will use as the container. There are all kinds of options here, and this is often where most of the creativity in the entire project comes from.



People have used everything from old and compromised shoes and boots to recyclable metals and reusable plastic. It really just depends on what you have lying in and around the house. There are few boundaries or limitations to this choice. It is really just a matter of what's around and available. Some people even go to the store and purchase new receptacles, but unless you need something that is larger than what you have to work with around the house, this shouldn't be necessary. It almost takes away from the simplicity of container gardening.

A guideline that you can use when choosing the actual containers to house the plant, is to determine the anticipated size of the plant inside when it is fully grown. A receptacle that is too small will constrict the plant's growth and this can cause it to wither and die. It is best to do a little bit of research and get a general idea of the expected size of the plants that you have chosen to ensure that whatever container you are choosing for each plant is in fact large enough. If you are unsure about the suspected growth of a particular plant, and you can't just find something credible online to purchase, you can feel free to ask those experienced lawn and gardening associates to give you a bit of insight.

While you are purchasing your plants from some location, ensure that you are also getting the appropriate information regarding caring for the plant itself. While there are plenty, if not most plants, that can survive and thrive in all purpose soil, it is not something that is necessarily best for any plant that you get. If you want your plants to have the fullest life, brightest colors, and best production, you need to find out what kind of soil is best for them. In addition to this, you should research the ideal caring approach (i.e. watering, amount of sunlight, etc.) that the particular plant will need as well.

Now that you have selected a type of plant, and purchased or obtained it, it is time to head back to get to work on your new project. From the other paragraph, you should have a general idea of what container you planned to use. However, preparing that container is something that is important as well. For an example, if you were to choose a boot as your receptacle, there are some steps that you should be taking to get this particular footwear ready to house a plant. For this particular example, you would ensure that everything were out of the inside of the boot prior to filling it up with the appropriate soil. You are also going to need to drill weep holes in the bottom of the boot to allow added water to run seep out instead of pooling at the inside the sole of the boot.

Once you have completed this step, you are going to have to determine the best locations for each of your individual plants. Since most of them require a hearty amount of sunlight, choosing a well lit area of your porch, windows or backyard might be the ideal approach. Pay close attention again to the care details for the plant that you are trying to grow. Too much sun and you could kill it or cause it now to fully bloom. Likewise, too little sun when it needs a lot could have the same detrimental effect.

When it comes to container gardening, there are obviously several things to know and consider. Hopefully this chapter was able to give you some helpful tips to successfully grow these plants to their fullest bloom, and keep them healthy. They are popular because they are relatively low maintenance and do not require a lot of space or invested time. While the set up might take a little bit, having a container garden is fun for the whole family.

CHAPTER 4- COMMON MISTAKES PERSONS MAKE WHEN DOING CONTAINER GARDENING

Container gardening can be the ideal approach to achieve the ambiance of fresh flowers and delicious herbs within a limited space. However, if your garden isn't flourishing, here are a few easily remedied mistakes that most container gardeners make at least once.

Disproportioned pot to plant ratio: It is important to research your plants growth patterns, and average height, before choosing a container. A large container with small plants can look measly, while a small container with large plants can look awkward. A good place to start would be by choosing at least one plant that is the same height as the container and work from there.

Relocating your container once it's been filled: A large container filled with soil can be deceptively heavy. While it may make sense to fill your containers at one location before dispatching them, do your back a favor—fill them where they will be placed. Dragging pots around your patio is far more awkward then carrying around a bag of soil.

Drowning your plants: Everyone understand that plants need water in order to grow; however, too much of a good thing can make you sick. This principle holds true for container gardening as well. Be sure to have ample drainage holes at the bottom of your container to avoid over-watering. Also, be sure to check the moisture level of the soil before you water. You can do this by sticking your entire pointer finger into the soil. If the soil at your fingertips feels wet, it is not time to water. If the soil feels dry, then it's time for a shower.

Also, be sure to read the watering requirements for each of your plants. Some desert plants can go weeks without watering, while others require daily showers. You can tell you are over-watering if your plant is limp and the leaves are turning yellow. If this is the case, move your plant to a breezy area to allow the soil to dry.



Under- watering: In general, container gardens require more water. Depending on whether you have a small pot or a large window box, the amount of watering is hinged on the quantity of soil. A small hanging plant might require daily watering, while a large container will only need water twice a week.

When watering, soak your plant until you see the water coming out the bottom of the container. A superficial mist will not penetrate past the topsoil and cause your plant to dry out.

Plants need to eat too: The key to a successful container garden lies in fertilization. Most potting soils have a limited amount of the required nutrients for healthy growth. Generally in containers, those nutrients are washed out by constant watering or used too quickly by the plant.

You can start by adding in a diluted liquid fertilizer every couple of weeks, or mixing a slow release one with your soil. Remember, flowering plants and vegetables or herbs have different fertilizing requirements. There are also plenty of all natural or organic options to choose from as well.

Refusing to let go: If you have tried everything to revive your plant to no avail, it might be time to let it go. Use the dead plant as compost and start over.

Starting with a bad source: Buying your plants from a reputable nursery is your safest bet to ensure that you get quality products. You'll find nursery staff to be far more knowledgeable and passionate about gardening. Generally, the plants are better taken care of, and you have a higher chance of getting plants that are disease free.

Not to completely discount a chain store that sells bulk plants. The prices are more competitive, but you do get what you pay for as far as quality is concerned. If the convenience and price is too tempting, seek out an employee and ask what day they receive their inventory. By picking your plants the day they arrive you'll have a much higher chance of avoiding purchase of a sickly under cared for plant.

Fear of cutting: When the ends of your hair start to split you go to the hairstylist for a trim, and your hair grows back looking healthier for it. The same goes for your plants. Think of pruning as giving your plant a trim. If your container is looking a bit raggedy, prune them back and chances are they will return healthier and happier.

Bad neighbors: Read the seed packets or labels to be sure all your container plants require the same type of soil and care. By sticking plants with different soil requirements, sun exposure and water requirements together you'll end up with a mixture of dead plants.

Unrealistic expectations: Explore your expectations in relation to your living conditions and lifestyle. While you might desire a large container filled with seasoned vegetables, you may find that you lack the space and time requirements. If you travel often, either set up a drip system or hire help to care for your containers while you are gone. Before you decide on a window box check with your HOA or Landlord, often they'll have certain height and width parameters.

Remember, container gardening doesn't have to be complicated. Like most things, it's a trial and error hobby. Gardening should bring joy to your life and bring brighten your space. Allow yourself room to grow, explore different options and have fun with it.

CHAPTER 5- CONTAINER GARDENING- BEST CROPS TO PLANT

There are dozens of ways to create a spectacular looking container garden. Not only does it begin with artsy and decorative planters, such as terracotta, but with the best plants in itself for creating a potted or contained garden collection. Choosing a container garden offers quite a bit more benefits than one would think. After some research, some of the best plants to use in a container garden are Pentas, Zinnias, Coleus, Purple-blue, and Yellowing and Sweet Potato Vine plants.



Plants of Pentas

Add a splash of red, pink, lavender and white to your container garden with Pentas. These individually colored flowers make an excellent choice in any garden. There are several versions of Pentas to choose from like red, pink, lavender and white. They are beautiful to look at, easy to plant and grow without any problems. They bloom through the entire summer, producing large beautiful cluster-like blooms that resemble stars. Even in the hottest summer heat, these plants will continue to bloom to the fullest. Pentas are annuals and grow best in sunny areas. Their growth expectancy in height is up to four feet and three feet in width. All would make an excellent choice to use and add a pop of color to your container garden.

Zinnia Flower Plants

Some other great container plants, even in white, are the Zinnia Crystal White flowers. Zinnias are crops that grow best in the warmest climate and in fertile, hummus-rich and well-drained soils with full sun exposure. Their blooms are summer long with shapes that look like domes and lance-shaped. The texture feel like sandpaper and the height can reach up to 12 inches tall. They make the best plants for a container garden because they simply are carefree, easy to grow and are offer low maintenance.

Coleus Flower Plants

Another great container garden plant is the Coleus Plant. The Coleus is a tropical perennial plant that make wonderful foliage plants or as an accent to other plants. The Coleus comes in a variety of shades like pink, red, yellow, green even maroon. They are also great for adding shade to your other flowered containers.

Another reason the Coleus makes a great container plant is because it is fairly inexpensive to purchase, offers great eye-catching color and grows quickly and easily without much effort. They must be grown in a consistent temperature of at least 50-60 degrees Fahrenheit to maintain its beauty and luster. They should also be placed in direct contact to soak up lots of sunlight or full sun exposure is best for these beauties. The coleus is easy to grow because it retains moisture and should be planted in a light soil.

Purple-Blue Plants

An Herbaceous perennial plant called “Mona Lavender” adds a pleasant purple splash of color to your container garden. Its blooms are a vibrant ‘lavender’ color and are a bushy, rounded and stand upright. They grow up to 2 feet tall and spread about the same in width. They grow best in regular moisture with well-drained soil. The temperature for these beauties should remain in 60-80 degree with partial sunlight exposures.

The Angelonia ‘Serena Lavender’ is another exceptional annual container garden plant. It will grow, bloom and provide the most beautiful lavender colored flowers around. They can survive through the mildest of winters to the most extreme summer heat. As they grow, they are compact in which they can grow up to three feet tall and a foot in width as well.

The Nemesis 'Blue Lagoon' plant makes another great perennial garden container. These bluish-purple and fragrant flowers are also very compact and grow uprightly. Their growth peak can be expected between late spring and early autumn. Then they will produce up to 12 inches in height and up to 10 inches of spread. The Blue Lagoons should be planted in full sun exposures with well-drained soil. They offer low maintenance by keeping watered.

The Petunia Supertunia Royal Velvet flower plant is another great crop to have in your potted garden. It is known for its vibrant deep dark purple color and low in maintenance. They are also very heat resistant and drought tolerant that will last during any weather condition. All they need is adequate moisture and fertilizer to keep their color vibrancy throughout the summer. They reach their peak in growth between 5 and 7 inches in height and spread up to 36 inches in width.

Yellowing Plants

The Lollipop Flower plant is another remarkably beautiful looking container garden crop. Another name it is also well known as is the ‘golden shrimp’ flower. This bright yellow summer annual plant must be planted in moist, well-drained or organically rich soil to thrive. Although the lollipop flower can survive in partial shade, it thrives on full sun exposures. Because it is mainly a tropical shrub or evergreen it can reach its peak growth at six inches tall in its natural environment. However, normally it reaches about one and a-half feet and the same in width.

The Lantana 'Lemon Drop' makes yet another great flowering plant for your contained garden. It is also a tropical evergreen perennial that is ever blooming. The blooms are colored in a beautiful yellow as the name 'lemon drop' and grow in multiple small narrow clusters of pale yellow flower petals. These Lantanas will attract many butterflies and grow best in full sun exposure, moist, well-drained soil. At its peak, these Lantana 'lemon drops' can reach up to 36 inches in height and up to 18 inches in width.

Marigolds also make a great crop to plant in your container garden. These annuals are easy to grow, fairly inexpensive and they keep your garden free from insects. In fact, planting marigolds in your garden provides the safest and most natural way to an organic gardening. They also require full sun exposure and will produce clusters of brightly colored yellow and orange carnation-like flower blooms. Marigolds are one the easiest plants to grow because they can thrive in any kind of soil that is kept well-drained, moist and some have an unmistakable aroma.

Sweet Potato Vine Plants

If you're looking for a contained garden plant that packs more 'punch' or 'potato', then choose a sweet potato vine plant. They are also the most popular and add a huge look to any garden. They are also great to use as foliage and in accenting other plants. Sweet potato vines grow very well during the warmest summer days and in soil that is moist and well-drained. They are easy to grow because they grow in full sun and in the shade. They even grow up to two feet tall and spread up to five feet wide.

CHAPTER 6- HOW TO DESIGN A CONTAINER GARDEN

Deciding to start a garden at your home is always a big decision for most people. When you do, you will have to commit quite a bit of time to it as any other big project you undertake. Before you start to come up with any ideas pertaining to piecing the garden together, you should consider the big picture of where this is going. A container garden will benefit you in many ways, since you aren't trying to plant a whole field's worth of crops; watering and maintaining soil nutrient balance will be easier, along with many other things that will be a definite plus to any novice gardener.



Figure Out Big Your Garden Needs To Be

Be honest. You may want a huge garden that will be the envy of all of your friends at the local gardening club, but do you really need all that much? Unless you plan on planting mostly flowers, or doing a lot of canning with all of those extra vegetables, then you should only plant a container garden big enough to suffice for your immediate needs. Caring for a container garden is much easier than caring for an outside garden, so this step will help you save yourself from doing needless labor. Then again, you could always sell the extra crops at the local farmers market for some nice padding to your wallet.

How Are You Going To Water Your Crops?

The ease of getting enough water on your crops is where a container garden really shines. Even with the most difficult of methods, it is still easier than letting the water escape into the depths of the earth. You will need to decide how much time you would like to put towards watering your garden. If you like the idea of getting everything started and then sitting back and letting it do its' thing, you should opt for an automated watering system. There are many ways to handle this approach; you can build one yourself with materials from a local hardware store, or you could buy an already assembled one from the store.

Cost isn't going to be very different for either one when you factor in the total cost for materials and your time. However, if you are handy at building an irrigation system, then you could possibly make yours a better custom fit for your garden. Just be sure that you use PVC pipe, as it will last you for many seasons in the outdoors, and it won't be easily punctured like a soft hose.

Another option for watering your crops is doing it by hand. While this may seem like a great way to do it at first, it will soon become a tedious everyday task for most. If you are one the select few who find pride in hand-watering your crops, then consider a good quality adjustable nozzle for your garden hose. Buy a hose reel and attach it somewhere nearby to your garden; this eliminates the need to deal with a tangled mess every time you water your garden. Taking these steps should ensure that you won't have any unpleasant surprises with your daily watering.

Feed Your Plants and They Will Feed You

One of the greatest foundations to a great garden is the fertilizer that is used to feed the plants. If you have ever wondered why some people just seem to have a green thumb and some don't, then you should start your search in the dirt. People may be sitting on a fertile gold mine for plants, and not even know it. By using a container garden you will be able to fertilize your dirt much more effectively than if you just dumped it on the ground. So which one should you use? Truthfully, there are many ways to deliver nutrients to the soil. There are many brands of fertilizer that are sold at the store. If you go this route, then you will only need to pick a brand and follow its' directions.

Most of the store bought kinds are mixed and ready to go, so there will be little room for error with these chemicals. If you apply too much, then you could actually feed your plants to the point of death. Just be careful to read the labels and you will be fine. Another way to fertilize your crops is to mix leftover food into the soil. Many nursing homes have food in trash bags that they throw away every day. Local eateries may even start saving their food waste for you in a bin if you ask them. Now don't think about it too much. It is decomposing food that is going into your garden, but it is one of the greatest ways to get nutrients in the soil.

Decide What Containers You Should Use

Once you know everything else about your garden, then you can begin to decide what to put it in. If cost is an issue for you, then you might consider using 55 gallon drums that are cut in half. If you have the money for a more elaborate container, you can build a set of garden boxes from wood. It will be easy to do, since you already know exactly what you need. Consider putting the containers on rollers, so that the plants can be moved if sunlight levels need to be adjusted.

CHAPTER 7- KEEPING PESTS AWAY FROM THE CONTAINER GARDEN

You have started a container garden; your plants and vegetables are thriving and along comes a pest. It may be the four legged version or the slimy, creepy crawlies there are ways to protect and keep your plants and vegetables from being destroyed. Now most gardeners have opted to be chemical free, but if not there are plenty of pesticides and insecticides to keep your plants safe, but if you like chemical free there are plenty of options to prevent those pests from eating your produce and demolishing your flowers and the flower bulbs which you have spent time and money cultivating.

As a gardener you will want to look at your plants and examine what is eating them. Remember that ninety-percent of insects are beneficial, and we do not want to kill these as they eat the ones who destroy our plants. When using pesticides keep in mind that all insects both the good and the bad will be killed, throwing off the gardens ecosystem.

The easiest pests to get rid of are snails and slugs. They eat the leaves, and leave nice holes in your produce. The cheapest route is to take an orange and or grapefruit half that is used and place grape juice or beer into them. These slimy creatures can't resist these smells and taste and will delve in. In the morning you can pick up the fruit half and snails/slugs and dispose in trash or kill your pest and throw in compost heap.



If you do not have fruit halves, fill a saucer with the beer or grape juice, mixed with a teaspoon of salt and these lovelies will dive right in and drown. If this is too much for those of you who love critters, it is said that copper wire or copper taping placed around your pots will keep these guys at bay. After some review there is some maintenance required for this to work. The copper must stay clean and no grass or leaves, or branches can rest or grow up against the pots as the snails/slugs will be able to crawl up into your containers. Then there is the old fashioned way of just picking them off and moving them to another location.

The one good thing about growing your plants in containers is that you can inspect them on a daily basis. Hence you can remove any tomato worms, caterpillars, or any other destructive insect that you may see, leaving behind the lady bugs and praying mantis to do their job. Organic sprays have also come along way. Several good varieties are Rose Farm, peppermint spray, which smells wonderful but keeps insects at bay, 100% garlic oil which is sprayed on the leaves that are being chewed, preventing further damage.

There are insect soaps that are sprayed on the bugs making them vulnerable to their surroundings. If spraying, picking, and examining your plants is too much work there is a row cover, that is lightweight that can be placed over your plants, allowing air, light, and water to come through but protects your plants from pests. Unfortunately this takes away from the aesthetics of garden containers, but they could be used at night allowing your plants to be protected from evening pests.

The most common complaint in gardening is squirrels and chipmunks, these cute critters will demolish flower bulbs in minutes, eat your greens and just ruin your mood for gardening. The easiest route is to place wire mesh over your containers before they have sprouted up. Make sure to secure firmly as these pests are extremely intelligent. River rock, and larger gravel also seem to keep them out of containers and it gives your containers a very natural and pleasing appeal. Like other animals squirrels and chipmunks do not like strong odors.

Coffee grounds are a great deterrent, and found in almost everyone's home. The grounds can be mixed in with your soil, or spread around the parameters of your container garden. Coffee is also high in acidity, so is extremely good for most of your garden plants. Soap bars are another great way to keep four legged pest away. Tied on string or laying around containers will deter.

Don't want bars of soap around; try another smelly deterrent that will make rabbits, skunks, squirrels, and deer stay away. At \$30 a bottle, fox and coyote urine will deter most mammals as they fear that a predator is lurking in the area. This spray can last you all season and keep pest at large. Reflective tape, anything that moves or makes noise will also help with annoying animals and send them scurrying into your neighbor's yard or up the street.

Other easy solutions, place a bird bath near your containers, the bath will attract birds and keep bugs at bay. This lovely addition will also give you complete happiness as you get to see a variety birds come around. Plant flowers which will draw in the good bugs, such as bees and butterflies, to pollinate your containers, along with the flowers, plant herbs that will distract the bad bugs from eating your treasures. These are easy solutions that will protect your container gardens giving you a peace of mind that all is well. Most of all, do not over react when you see a bug, they aren't all bad.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Danielle Long grew up in the city and remembers watching her mother set up the various container gardens around the home. From what her mom planted they were able to get various herbs and a few vegetables that would serve the entire household. When she became an adult and moved into her own home she carried that with her and set up her own little container garden to grow some herbs for her kitchen.

Danielle found this to be extremely beneficial and as such started to share her gardening tips with all of her friends. She then got the encouragement from her family and friends to share what she knew about container gardening with the world at large. With their support, she started to put together some great tips for beginners. Through her eyes the reader gets a full understanding of what container gardening is all about and how to get things started.